/815 cont./

X881 123

was not unusual. Particularly in recent times it has occasionally happened that a Yamana did not have an opportunity to be initiated until early manhood. For example, one of the candidates who entered when I did was 27 years old. They do not bother about age, but they do demand actual participation sooner or later.

but still struggled for a long time with the monstrous idea that a European should experience the čiéxaus (247). Meanwhile Nelly

247. In Volume I, 814, I described the serious difficulties I was obliged to overcome before the Selk'nam admitted me to their men's secret rites.

inspired the old women with enthusiasm for her plan, and with them, particularly, she had the desired success.

While the men finished their work on the farm, I arranged with Fred Lawrence to provide food for all participants. We had promised them that we would be responsible for the needs of everyone during the ceremony so that no one would be impeded by food-seeking and we would thus be assured of a smooth running of the affair. He was kind enough to provide the necessary sheep; I bought flour, legumes, coffee, and sugar, besides a few little things. In their leisure hours the old men discussed the plan in detail among themselves. Quite voluntarily they gathered around Alfredo as the one with the most experience and yielded to his decisions. The women prepared the small ornaments that are necessary and /816/ gradually put themselves into the serious mood of this ceremony. Nelly felt an indescribably great satisfaction as her longed-for čiéxaus approached. Meanwhile I personally was with the men a good deal and showed obvious willingness to meet all the demands that would be put upon me.

X881 346

It was agreed to erect the Great Hut close to the farm buildings in Punta Remolino, out of consideration for Nelly who could not be separated from her family for a longer period and who wanted her three grown daughters to take part in the concluding ceremony. Round about lay the huts and the smaller dwellings

/816 cont./

X 881 346 of the Indians; hence it was not necessary for them to move. Even before the farm work was finished, Alfredo, who was the actual leader of the festival, had appointed four men as watchmen. It was their duty to keep a strict watch so that no one should approach who was not invited or who would cause any kind of disturbance and particularly that all the children left behind in the camp would be scrupulously quiet. Hardly was everyone free when the younger men went into the woods and cut suitable small beech trunks which were shaped and prepared on the festival site. Meanwhile old Alfredo, along with other men, built the framework, and the watchmen attended to their duty whenever a few inquisitive children came too close. Each time they uttered the same strange cry, which everyone knows and fears. Within three days the Great Hut stood there, covered and finished. It was 12 meters long on the ground, with a maximum width of 2.60 meters in the center and a maximum height, also in the center, of 2.40 meters. It was long, with an almost uniform slope, and had a long elliptical outline. After that the fire was lighted inside.

X 881 123 Slowly all the men and the older women assembled. After making a quick selection, they squatted down in a place which they retained the whole time thereafter. Then they considered which young people were to be introduced as candidates. The bitter realization of their sad destiny now struck these people in the Great Hut with full force when they saw how few candidates there were left. At first it looked as though there were no young people who could be chosen for uš́wā́ala, for this or that family had only very small children. They agreed on 17-year-old Homestead and on Clement who was already 27 years old, but had never before been initiated in this ceremony. I was the third candidate.

While these deliberations were going, the rest of the adults who wanted to experience the whole procedure arrived. Their attitude was as reserved as though they were going to a religious ceremony. For more than an hour they maintained the deepest silence and strongest composure. Then Alfredo started singing a monotonous, sad song which a few others softly accompanied. They all sat there earnestly and thoughtfully and continued singing. This was the opening of the ceremony. In the late

/819 cont./

X881 123 men to dispel from the start any doubt and uncertainty about our plans. This time the situation was much more difficult than two years ago when Nelly was behind everything and was able to exert effective pressure. Since I had had some experience in handling these people, we soon came to an agreement.

X881 123 346 The next day, which was ushered in by wonderful sunlight from a cloudless sky, a few men began with the erection of the Great Hut. Actually it was not necessary to start from the ground up, for the year before a Great Hut had been built which was now put in shape again. As a matter of fact, the people had celebrated a čiéxaus here among themselves. The hut was barely 12 meters long. A favorable site had been chosen at the edge of the forest, far enough from the dwellings so that there would be no disturbances from the children. Many hands fell to work, and on the very next day the hut was standing and was well equipped. I had to whip up their enthusiasm constantly, but the abundant food and all kinds of tasty bits had a stimulating effect.

X881 Meanwhile two more families arrived late, among them old Pedro. The office of overseer fell to him quite naturally, for he was the best informed on tribal customs. Around noon on March 3, 1922, a few people had already taken their seats in the Great Hut; the start of the festival was planned for this day. They felt it necessary to sit there silently and compose themselves. The majority of the adults was still busy with all kinds of other work in their own huts. One person after another inconspicuously carried to the Great Hut what he needed for his bed. Thus there was quiet but constant traffic to and fro between the dwellings and the Great Hut, a sign that the ceremony would soon begin.

Toward five in the afternoon the last people arrived and we with them. /820/ As was customary, the participants squatted in two rows, to the right and left of the center aisle. Each of us kept his appointed place; the Indians had already distributed themselves at random. The place one chose had to be retained thereafter. When it began to grow dark outside, Santiago finally began a soft humming which gradually increased to a loud singing. The other people joined in and continued it. On the first evening there were already a few dances. Everyone maintained the mood that is necessary for this ceremony.

/830 cont./

X881 territory. Thus they isolate themselves from one another to a
361 certain extent, and slight differences and local peculiarities of this ceremony have arisen in one region or another.

X881 Although the geographical location does not matter, the
881 place must fulfill certain conditions. Today, and sometimes
361 formerly, the Great Hut is hidden from the eyes of the curious.
346 Europeans especially are regarded as such, as well as the neighboring Halakwulup and Selk'nam. They like to choose an island or an inlet that is seldom visited. The Great Hut is built at the edge of the forest or near a wall or rock, so that it is inconspicuous and, in addition, blends into the landscape. The ground on which it is placed must be as dry as possible, that is, it must be gravel or shingle, for clayey earth, with all the people walking on it, would become a morass beyond all description. Furthermore, the place must be well protected against the buffeting of heavy winds and rain. If rain leaked in at too many spots or smoke blew around inside as a result of repeated gusts of wind, many of the people would find it impossible to protect themselves. The Great Hut is always crowded, and disturbances of the strict proceedings must be avoided.

Moreover, the Yamana have a few other unavoidable requirements for the site of the Great Hut. Firewood must be available nearby, and there must be quantities of it, for during the long ceremony /831/ the numerous participants use a great deal. There must be a brook not too far off, for the Indians drink a great deal of water and it would be burdensome to go a long way for it. Finally, whatever else the place may offer the coasts of the vicinity must be provided with quantities of mussels because these are needed every day.

X881 There is a great deal of preliminary calculation and reconnoiter-
361 ing before the men in charge decide on a particular place of assembly. Aside from the work required to build a new Great Hut, a move is always regarded as disturbing and uncomfortable and is avoided from the outset, if possible. If they have a completely free choice, they assemble in a place that has already proved suitable in former years. It is taken for granted that the availability of food is always a decisive factor; half a hundred persons

/832 cont./

a. Construction of the Great Hut

X 881 346

Whether the families have assembled in one place for some extraneous reason or at the invitation of the chosen leader, several men survey the locality carefully to see which spot is most suitable for the construction of the Great Hut. We have just mentioned (p. 673) what is required of the place. Above all the earth must /833/ be dry and the adjoining area must furnish good protection. The distance to the nearest huts must not be more than 150 meters since every adult participant returns more or less frequently to his dwelling and does not want to go too long a distance. The women's concern about their small children does not permit them to be too far away. All these things are considered in the choice of the site for the Great Hut.

From the start the leader makes sure of a few younger men who prove to be active and willing to work. Hesitation and delay would have a paralyzing effect on the families; hence he promptly begins the construction of the Great Hut. If the place for it has been definitely determined, he sends his men into the woods where they cut long, thin beech trunks and bring them to the site. The number required depends on their plans for the size of the structure. At least 80 small trunks of different thicknesses and medium length are required.

They choose a smooth spot on the ground, measure the circumference with the naked eye, and remove any protruding stones. At the same time the leader estimates the length that he wants the entire structure to have. At one end two of the stronger trunks are rammed into the earth scarcely more than 50 centimeters apart at the bottom. They flank the entrance and are known as wéfia tűawina. They are set at an angle of about 45 degrees. The same thing is done with two more trunks exactly opposite them, which flank the exit and are called uščlun tűawina. The ends of these two pairs are fastened together. If these poles prove to be too short because a long hut is planned, pieces are inserted between them. The pair of poles does not serve as special support like pillars, nor is this necessary, but it does represent a kind of main rib for the entire vault, with reference to which all the other small poles are arranged.

After that the so-called transverse arches are set up, one after another and at right angles to the above-mentioned pair of poles.

/833 cont./

X 881 346 The thicker and usually pointed end of the small trunk is pounded into the earth very much at an angle to the main rib. The free end is tied to the opposite small trunk. Measured on the ground, all these small trunks are about 15 centimeters apart. A few more long poles are now placed longitudinally over the transverse arches in order to hold the vault together better. The thick end is likewise pounded into the earth at the proper angle, and the small pole itself, as parallel as possible to the others, is drawn over the transverse arches. The intersections are tied with rush stalks of [824] Marsippospermum grandiflorum or with seal tendons. The long side areas of this framework are hung with large pieces of leather and the upper part is covered with thick leafy twigs of the evergreen [824] Nothofagus betuloides. Sometimes the entire hut is covered with beech branches. This completes the hut. /834/ It has a long elliptical groundplan and an elongated dome shape (Fig. 81), something like the community hut (p. 31).

The time it takes to erect the Great Hut, two or three days, depends on the number and the agility of the men taking part. Meanwhile others are working on the interior. First they mark out the hearth with rather thick small trunks placed on the cleaned and leveled ground. These pairs of trunks start a little to the side of each of the trunks that mark off the main and the secondary entrances, and they extend from one end to the other. This center passage is thus somewhat wider than the main and secondary entrances. Pegs about as long as a hand are rammed into the earth to give some support to the parallel trunks. /Fig. 81 appears here./ Brush with thick foliage is spread on either side of them. Later on each participant will spread his pieces of X 881 346 354 leather and skins over the brush to make a seat for himself. Since the people form only two rows, everyone can come close to the fire (254) or move away from it as he chooses. The brush on the

[177]

254. At present the Yamana use a rather large tin can or a wide iron pipe for the fire in their dwelling and in the canoe. This time they had placed two short pieces of a steamship funnel along the middle passage of the Great Hut. The fires inside of these produced sufficient warmth

/834 cont./

and no one was bothered very much by smoke. Formerly everyone felt the smoke, sometimes disagreeably, because the open fire extended the length of the hut.

hut framework above the fire is loosely arranged so that the smoke can get out quickly and easily.

The length of the hut depends, of course, on the number of participants; all the other measurements are just about the same for a long or short structure. The Great Hut in Puerto Mejillones is 11.30 meters long and has a maximum width on the ground of 3.60 meters and a perpendicular height in the exact center of 2.35 meters.

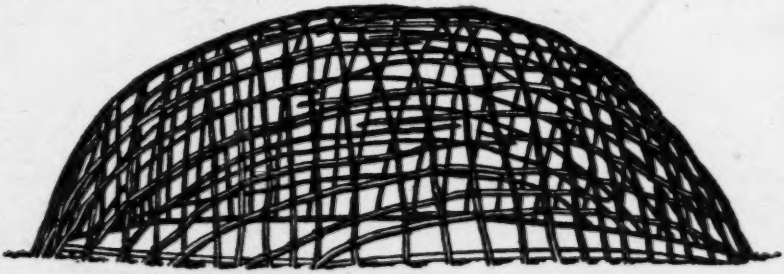


Fig. 81. Framework of the Great Hut.

The entrance is 0.46 meters wide on the ground and has a vertical height of 1.05 meters. The exit has a lower width of 0.40 meters and a vertical height of 0.90 meters. The exit is purposely kept lower /835/ and narrower. The two small openings are a little narrower on top because the two main trunks are not exactly parallel. Throughout Yamana territory the čiéxaus hut is erected according to the design just described (255) which is the only kind that furnishes

255. Lothrop (b):166 writes: "The eastern Yahgan, I was informed, did not use a domed hut for this rite, but a pointed conical wigwam like that seen among the Ona" /cited in English/. This statement is contrary to my experience. Old Water, who came from the east, often assured me that his countrymen, too, had exclusively built the same elongated, dome-shaped hut that is used in other parts of the region for the initiation.

/835 cont./
X881 comfortable seating for many people and can be extended in
346 length at will, so that all are safely under shelter.

X881 The Yamana, however, are not satisfied with this plain con-
346 struction, but decorate it to a considerable extent on the inside.
352 They are satisfied artistically with painting simple designs on wood.
531 Formerly when they did not have the European iron ax, they scraped the bark off single small trunks with mussel shells and painted their designs directly on the exposed wood fibers. This is still done, but nowadays they more often make long, narrow little tablets with their ax, which are placed against the framework on the interior, are slightly curved at the bottom, and form an arch up to the highest center line. They are placed 40 to 60 centimeters apart and usually in such a way that two are opposite each other.

Finally, in the upper part of the framework they fasten short, small, painted tablets and sticks which hang down freely. The latter are 25 to 35 centimeters long, cylindrical, with a smooth surface and ends cut off straight. The thinner end points downward. The little tablets are always long and narrow, 20 to 45 centimeters long, seven to ten centimeters wide, and the corners are either rounded or sharp. In the latter case, the wider of the two narrow sides ends in a short, square little handle into which a small hole is bored or a flat notch is cut. The little tablets and sticks, yĕxalapáteg ikamanáki, are fastened by a tendon or reed stalk in the center of the vaulted framework where they hang down freely and lightly swing in the draft or the vibration of the framework (cf. the reproductions on Plates 2 and 3).

386 If the Yamana wish to paint these ornamental plaques, as well as the small trunks and long, small tablets, they use the customary colors, black, white, and red, which they mix with seal blubber. They apply this mixture with their fingers, arranging dots and lines in varied patterns. The person painting them follows his artistic inspiration of the moment and his feeling for beauty; hence all kinds of combinations of lines, dots, and circles appear in manifold variety.

The Yamana repeatedly assured me that these ornamental objects had no particular meaning and served exclusively to beautify /836/ their čiĕxaus hut (256). They are left there after

256. Reproductions of these ornamental plaques

X 881 /836 cont./
• 346 352 531

and sticks with different patterns may be found in black and white in Koppers (a):48, and in color in Lothrop (b):126. In the latter reproductions, the background is too bright a yellow. It is not painted, but left in the natural color of the beech wood.

the ceremony is over (257), for such articles are not used in any

257. After my first initiation and later after my second, when I expressed the wish to take along a few of these ornamental objects, the Indians took down not only the long painted plaques and hanging sticks, but also removed the long thin pieces of wood and trunks out of the ground and gave them all to me without hesitation, further proof that they do not regard these things as having any value other than as decorations for the Great Hut during the initiation.

other way.

X 881 346 There is no partition anywhere inside the hut, and one can survey the whole without obstruction from one end to the other. Also, there is no particular allotment of areas and places to sit. The candidates with their sponsors squat between the other participants in an informal, relaxed arrangement. The adults, however, use the wider entrance, tumêci, almost exclusively, whereas the úswaala have contact with the outside world only by way of the narrower entrance, úsatumêci (258). The two entrances are so

258. BD:113 gives " 'ussa,' position in or up..., up at the inner end of the room" /cited in English/.

arranged that the wider one for the adults faces the camp while the other one is nearer the woods so that the candidates, unobserved by children and adults in the camp, can disappear into it. Each of the entrances is closed off with a large piece of leather (259)

[177]

259. Nowadays they often use sacking and

/836 cont./

X 881
346
[177]

sailcloth which is also drawn over the entire framework as a covering. Very large pieces prevent the rain from dripping in annoyingly. The Fuegians appreciate this, and in February, 1920, they borrowed a wide tent canvas from Fred Lawrence for the Great Hut in Punta Remolino.

that hangs in front of it. It prevents the wind from beating in and also keeps anyone from looking into the room lighted by the fire. Sometimes a guard will pre-empt the seat near the tumeci, although he does not have any particular right to it. Everyone is content to take a seat, mici, to the right or left of the fire, in the middle or on the sides, as chance would have it. The entire interior is called "alin" (260), but this designation is almost

260. This word originally meant "rock cave at the surface of the water where sea lions gather." Just as these animals assemble in their rock cave, so have the Yamana assembled in their play in the Great Hut. The further symbolic significance of this word and the meaning of the dance staff and forehead decoration are given in detail on p. 713

always used only for the little space near the narrower entrance at the rear.

The entire dome, despite its great flexibility, is stable enough because the individual poles forming the framework are tied and plaited together and also driven into the earth a short distance. The dome needs firmness, for sometimes it must withstand strong buffeting by the wind on its long side. During the dances /837/ held inside, the framework sometimes suffers heavy blows when a dance group falls against it. Moreover, it is customary, in order to ward off the influence of evil spirits, to shake it often so that it vibrates in all its parts. Individual persons will seize it with such force that one fears they will tear the whole weave apart. Finally, the watchmen climb up to the highest

1: Gusinde--682 E-5 (1918-1924) 1937 SH6 Yahgan. SH6

/837 cont./

X881 346 point on the outside in order to keep a lookout. Truly, the hut framework withstands a great deal. Individual gaps that appear and let rain or snow in are immediately closed.

β. Construction of the Cookhut

X881 264 In their everyday life the Yamana have no fixed times for meals. They help themselves when they are hungry or when something is offered. During the youth initiation even the adults have their eating considerably curtailed because food may not be prepared in the Great Hut. The food is prepared outside for all the participants together and is brought in ready to eat. Everyone gets plenty and is, of course, satisfied with everything that is offered. Even with these common meals, the adults are free to go back to their own hut for brief hours and to eat there what they have on hand. Many of them make use of this freedom more or less often.

X881 343 For the place in which food is to be prepared for the sometimes large number of ~~kipahar~~ participants, the Yamana choose a small hut which is specially erected about 20 to 30 paces from the Great Hut. In every respect it resembles the ordinary dwelling of that region, dome-shaped in the west and cone-shaped in the east. They do not use the ornamental plaques mentioned above [654] or any other decoration in it. In the center of the hut a huge fire burns, where the pieces of meat and the slabs of fat are roasted. The hot ashes serve to bake the fish and steam the mussels. This hut is large enough so that the Indian women working in it can also sleep there. Thus, even in size it resembles an ordinary dwelling. Usually this cookhut is built immediately after the Great Hut is finished, sometimes even while it is being built, for with the start of the ceremony, the work of the women engaged in cooking also begins (261).

[171] 261. In the same way the Halakwulup also erect a cookhut beside the Great Hut for their initiation rite, in which food for all the participants is prepared. See Gusinde (op. 341).

/954 cont./

X881 S24 enthusiasm develops and they all divert themselves for several hours until they begin to feel exhausted. At times their eagerness borders on abandon. This is understandable, since now, no longer bound by the strict čiéxaus program, the people are free to burst out without restraint. The young people are called upon particularly often. Here in the open, in front of everyone, they are supposed to show also the skills they have acquired in the social games which they were often called upon to join in the čiéxaus hut (p. 813).

X881 S33 The conversations and games after the big feast finally come to an end. At the proper moment the overseer or some older person intones the tíxer song, and all the participants promptly join in. They immediately try to assume a respectful pose and to make their voices solemn. This tíxer song is the actual farewell song, during which all "spirits" arrange themselves and with which they are given an accompaniment back to their particular abode by the people here, just as this was done on almost every evening (p. 787). The people present, however, sing this song for themselves, too, before they take leave of each other, for today or tomorrow they will leave this place and probably not see each other again for a long time. This is why they put into the final tíxer song all their feelings of joy and gratitude for their renewed vigor during this enjoyable, inspiring čiéxaus celebration. The song dies away full of melancholy, and silently and for a long time thereafter everyone gives himself up to his thoughts.

X881 Gradually one person and then another get up and go back once more to the Great Hut. Here he collects his utensils, tools, and ornaments, and takes final leave of this place. Everyone takes care of his own things and moves them over to his own dwelling where, after a long time, he again settles himself for the night. If the weather is good, a family may board their canoe that same day and depart. /955/ Most of the people definitely leave the following morning and enthusiastically welcome the longed-for freedom to rove far and wide without restraint. The place where many people were still gathered together for the common celebration just a short time ago becomes depopulated surprisingly quickly.

X881 346 After that no one pays any attention to the Great Hut.

/955 cont./

Deserted and unprotected, it remains exposed to the raging natural forces; storms work havoc with the roof and finally with the whole framework, and sooner or later it collapses. The decorated sticks and ornamental plaques are also destroyed with it. After a few months only a person's memory can tell him where the Xálaxage but recently stood.

Now the place where for weeks many human beings meditated about their own egos and where they adapted themselves to a time of restraint is silent and deserted. The rough wind again bravely shakes the branches through which, shortly before, thin columns of smoke curled up into the treetops. It drives withered leaves over the grassy area on which young and old delighted in lively games.

3. Meaning and Value of the Initiation

No matter how one looks at the Xálaxage celebration, its individual components work together to achieve the one definite goal of making the maturing young people spiritually and physically competent to fulfill the duties of a grown man or woman independently. It is above all a training of the mind; hence the teachings and exhortations make up a considerable part of the whole affair. In order to make the minds of young people susceptible and receptive, their bodies are forced to become subservient to it through difficult exercises in self-control, including physical immobility, constant silence, curtailed sleep, and considerable fasting. Beyond the self-control to be achieved, the spiritual life of the young ulwàla becomes considerably enriched by the myths and legends, some of which are revealed to them here for the first time, as well as by the social games in which they must here, for the first time, publicly test themselves. Added to all this is the training in the required accomplishments and successful methods of work which make every man and every woman capable of obtaining a living as easily as possible for himself and his family.

Actually, the adults achieve this twin goal with their ulwàla through a faithful application of the principles esteemed in the Xálaxage. Convincing proof is furnished by those upright, virtuous

1: Gusinde--1321 E-5 (1918-1924) 1937 5196 Yahgan 5196

/1490 cont./

my efforts toward witnessing this noteworthy arrangement (Gusinde [1]:961). At first my Yaghan friends would not hear of this plan. They felt unsure of themselves because about 15 years had passed since the last occasion of this kind, which took place under the leadership of Athannis in Lowatiyawaja (Punta Pantalón on Navarino Island) and because the yékamuf of the present time regard themselves as weak and less capable than their predecessors. Nevertheless, I was accorded the rare privilege of becoming acquainted with this observance, which is very significant in some respects, through personal participation (p. 190 /continued/). Since then it has not been repeated and thus it was really the last hóma-yékamuf in the actual and strict sense.

a. Preparation

In case this or that group of medicine men firmly intends to initiate a hóma-yékamuf soon, they come to an agreement in ordinary conversation as to the place where they wish to gather. They have no special requirements for the location, but it must be suitable for a sojourn of several families for some time. The conditions which must be met are like those required for the Yahaga or kína. Above all it must be a place where they need not fear major disturbances of any kind.

As soon as several families have settled down in the place agreed upon, the erection of the special hut begins without delay. The hut is called hóma tamúka, sometimes more definitely hóma tóma túka. It resembles the one for the kína celebration; in other words, it is a spacious hut in the usual cone shape. The base is circular or lengthened to an oval shape, depending on whether it is erected for a few or many participants. The individual small trunks of this construction /1401/ are planted a few centimeters in the ground for greater stability and are placed close together. This framework is covered on the outside with pieces of leather. If not enough of them should be available, thick beech foliage is used as a covering. The maximum interior height is about three and a half meters. The interior is decorated with a white line the width of a hand, which runs all

1.Outside--USU E-S (1910-1950) 1937 USU Tolgas USU

/1401 cont./

the way around about a meter above the ground. In some exceptional cases, the interior up to about two meters from the ground may be painted uniformly white. The fire is kept burning constantly in the center of the hut, and a narrow passage is left free around it. Between it and the wall there is enough space for the participants to sit or lie down. This whole area is covered with a layer, eight centimeters thick, of branches with dense foliage from the evergreen beech (Nothofagus betuloides). On top of this is a layer of dust, with pumice grain, ngapuhiko (Calamagrostis), which is also used in the kina hut for the same purpose. Firewood is piled up outside the hut, furnished by younger men who take part as spectators or visitors, that is, who are neither yihanuf themselves nor intend to become such. In the seating arrangement the leader of this affair has the place to the left of the entrance; farther inside the yihanuf and candidates alternate in, such a way that one to three of the latter sit between two yihanuf. Naturally the Great Hut is so situated that its broad entrance opens to the east and does not face the camp with its family dwellings.

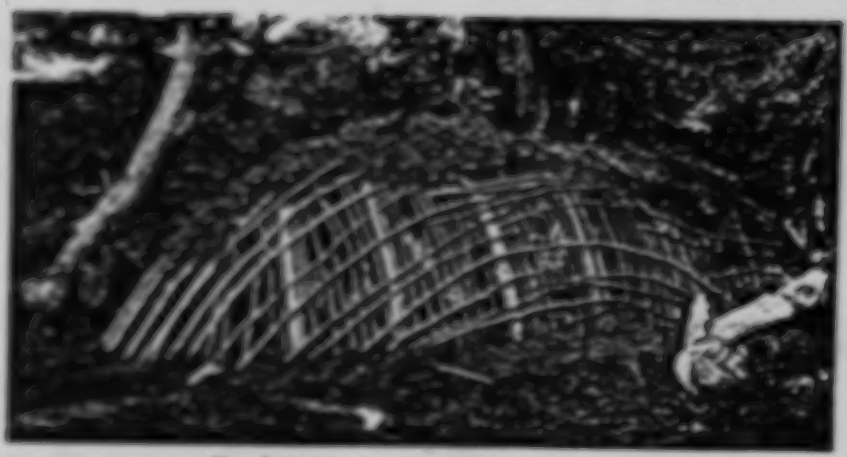
As has already been indicated, a very influential older medicine man fills the office of leader. He is called hiyanuwe. He is usually responsible for the decisive stimulus that has instigated the affair. He makes the initial preparations and gathers together a few friendly colleagues to discuss the details of the program. He automatically becomes the leader, without being definitely or formally chosen, and everyone submits to his leadership without opposition. Only a man of superior knowledge and rich experience is considered for this post. He is held in high esteem by everyone because of his great ability and his incomparable achievements. This leader then gives detailed instructions to the participants, following the traditional program with which he must be familiar. Above all he sees to it that no disturbance or distraction of any kind interferes.

In accordance with the purpose of this occasion, a number of yihanuf, of course, arrive as participants, for this is properly their own undertaking and they, obviously, are primarily concerned. They hasten to it from the surrounding vicinity, and sometimes a yihanuf will come from a great distance in case he has some friendly connection with this gathering and wishes to

1. Gwandu--1451 E-5 (1910-1924) 1937 SHS Yahgan SHS

Watchmen in Action

Youth Initiation Hut, Interior



Youth Initiation Hut, Exterior

Cleaner Painting

Watchman

Watchman's Assistant

844 herself and the infant in the sea, and the mother usually took sea baths for some days thereafter. For some time before and after a child's birth the mother and father observed certain food and other taboos. A form of couvade obtained, especially in the case of a first [846] child, the father remaining quiet in the tent and abstaining from most work for some days while relatives and friends supplied the family with necessities. The placenta was burned; the navel cord, dried and kept.

Marital relations were avoided for about 6 weeks or more after [842] delivery. Weaning ordinarily took place after 10 to 15 months, but in some cases not until a good deal later. The child was commonly [55] named after its birthplace.

Education.—Corporal punishment was rare. Severer correction 861 was ordinarily verbal, or else took the form of sending the child out of the hut for the day. A great deal of moralizing counsel was given the growing child by elders, counsel not always received with eager alertness by him, to judge from one of the instructions stressed in the initiation rite; viz, to listen attentively to what his elders told him even when the sermon was long drawn out. The sexes were kept separated after about the 7th year.

841 Girls' puberty observances.—At her first menses, the girl fasted, 881 eating little or nothing, for 3 days. Both cheeks from the eyes down were painted with red radiating streaks. Older women gave her much moral counsel. On the 8th or 10th day she bathed and washed in the sea. At the end, a feast was given to all the members of the group.

881 The čiéxaus initiation rite.—This rite (Koppers, 1924, pp. 45–95; Gusinde, 1937, pp. 805–961), for both boys and girls together, and actively participated in by all their elders who had previously been initiated, was the most important native ceremony, the focal point, in a sense, of their religious life, a dynamic stay of social order and solidarity. It was likewise an intensive training course, constituting the climactic event in the native educational system.

This initiation rite, the čiéxaus, under the auspices, it seems, of the local group, rather than of the dialectic division or whole *Yahgan* tribe, was held not at stated seasons or intervals, but as need or occasion arose, yearly or more or less often than yearly. It could last from several days to several months. The candidates were boys and girls who had reached puberty.

The chosen officers in charge of the rite were a leader, a mentor, and guards. A special large hut, of oval beehive or conical construc- [346] tion, was used, with simple decorations in the way of red, white, and black painting on the framework inside and similarly painted oblong boards hung up. Each participant wore a special diademlike feather

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

as much as five feet below the surface. Here the housetop need scarcely have risen above the ground level, and the people within must have been snugly lodged against winter gales. But the swirling smoke was a constant annoyance, and many accounts speak of the Yahgans' red and inflamed eyes.

Initiation or ceremonial houses differed from the living houses chiefly in size. In the west they were domed and oval in outline, as shown in pl. XIV. In the east they took the form of a heavy solid tipi-shape dwelling of logs like the Ona initiation lodge (fig. 38).

Under mission influence the Yahgan in late years built small plank houses of European type. A group of these was found at Puerto Mejillones and Porto Piedra on Navarin island which were used as winter quarters (pl. XVIII). They were wind- and water-tight, and some had wooden floors, bunks, and stoves. The material for their construction was begged, stolen, or picked up on the beach.

Camp Equipment

Yahgan camp equipment, in spite of superior transportation facilities, was just as primitive as that of the Foot Indians, among whom every article, and the infants as well, had to be carried on the back. Strong and simple as are the objects below listed, they

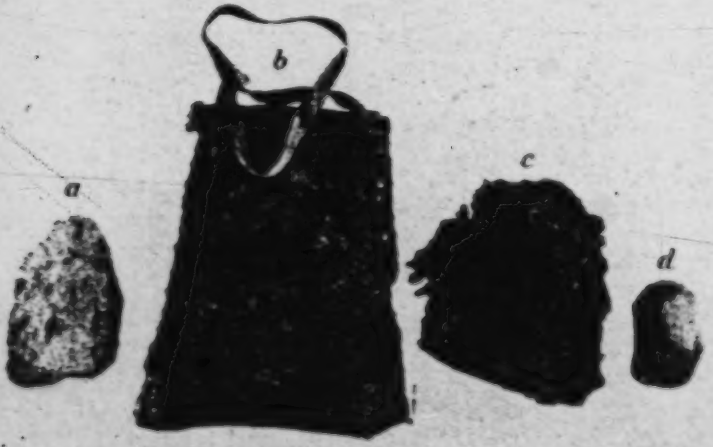


FIG. 53.—Yahgan fire-making apparatus. *a*, Flint; *b*, pouch; *c*, tinder; *d*, pyrites. Width of bag, 5 in. (14/2352)

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

death of a relative. All these called for vengeance, but the Yahgan seem to have felt antipathy rather than hatred, so vengeance might be deferred for several years, during which time mutual friends might compose the quarrel.

Blood loyalty was recognized among the Yahgan, but apparently was not fiercely cherished as among the Ona. Rev. Thomas Bridges states that when a murder occurred the friends and relatives of the victim would take revenge, but the family of the murderer abandoned him and made no effort to defend him. This certainly is not customary among primitive people with a highly developed consciousness of consanguinity like the Yahgan, and perhaps Mr. Bridges' statement represents the result of missionary contact rather than the original state of affairs.

Organized warfare, during which any member of one group would kill at sight any member of another group, as among the Ona, was unknown to the Yahgan, but blood revenge was sometimes executed on a relative of a murderer.

Initiation

Thanks to the studies of Gusinde and Koppers full and complete information about the Yahgan initiation rites is available, and the reader desirous of fuller information than is given here is referred to their various publications on this subject listed in the bibliography. Two ceremonies were in use among the Yahgan, known as *shiehâus* and *kina*. The first of these, celebrated by both sexes, apparently is the ancient Yahgan rite, while the other corresponds closely to the Ona *klókten* ceremony and represents culture borrowing from that tribe. Both may be described as a systematic educational course for the youth of the tribe—"going to school," the Yahgan called them.

For the *shiehâus* ceremony a large domed hut (*mánaga*), elliptical in outline, was erected near the encampment. The framework was of split saplings an inch or two in diameter, bent and set up to form arch-like ribs, and secured in place by a few horizontal beams (pl. XIV). These timbers were held together by lashings of gut. At either end of the hut were doors, one large to admit spectators, one small for the use of the candidates. On the roof they piled branches of the evergreen antarctic beech to afford shelter to those within, but the sides were left open to the weather. Rows of logs staked in place on the floor divided it into a central gangway

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

346 flanked by benches, built up by branches covered with skins. In the middle of the gangway burned a fire.

The house we have described was the type used by the central and western Yahgan. Our illustrations show the lodge erected in

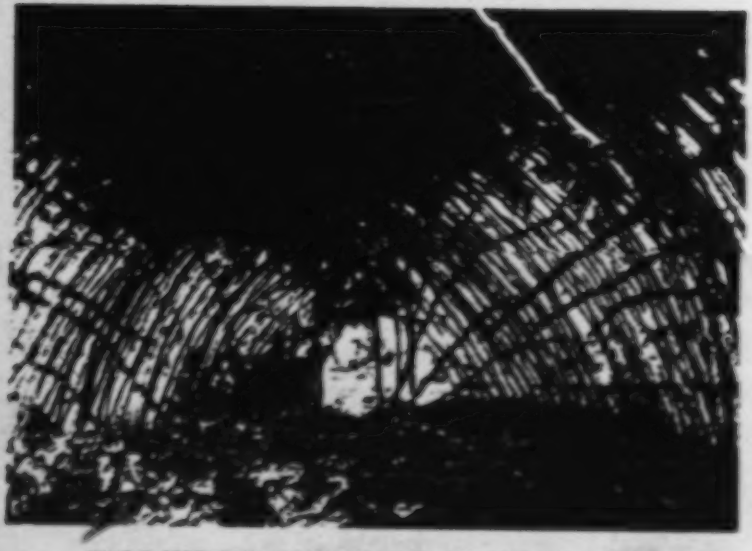
[881
292
293]

FIG. 90.—*a*, Eastern Yahgan initiate's headband and scratching-stick (14/2361); length of stick, 5 in. *b*, Kelp-goose down headband (14/2344); length, 19 in.

1922 at the instance of Gusinde and Koppers on Navarin island. The eastern Yahgan, I was informed, did not use a domed hut for this rite, but a pointed conical wigwam like that seen among the Ona (fig. 38).

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

346



YAHGAN CEREMONIAL LODGE, PUERTO MEJILLONES, NAVARIN ISLAND

[p. 166-A]

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

To beautify the initiation lodge, the flat inner surface of the split sapings constituting the framework was painted with red, white, and black paint. Broad boards, inserted at regular intervals in the frame, as may be seen in the upper view in pl. XIV, received similar decoration. The nature of the embellishment is shown in pl. IX, a series of designs copied from the lodge we have described. When a ceremony was in progress the hut was further adorned with smal painted tablets hung from the roof, while an additional touch of olor came from painted wands (fig. 91) which often were wedged inthe frame of the house when not in use.

FIG. 91.—Yahgan painted ceremonial wands. Length of *b*, 24 in. (14/2227½)

Two hundred feet or so from the initiation lodge a second and smaller hut was erected to serve as a cook-house where meals for the candidates and officials were prepared.

The paraphernalia used during the ceremony we illustrate in pl. XV and figs. 90 and 91. It consists of heron-plume headbands (*kuparuára*) worn by the officials, kelp-goose down headbands (*pugal*) worn by the others present, a narrow hide headband painted white (*hehel*) worn by the initiate during part of the ceremony, a small stick also painted white (*w'matámia*) used for scratching, and variously painted wands (*tumoistáka*). The scratching-stick is assigned to all the Yahgan by Koppers (1925), but I was told that it was used only by the easterners. The wands were held in the hand during the singing and dancing, and were swung in time with the music. When not in use they were thrust upright in the ground or stuck in the frame of the lodge. If one fell on the ground it was considered an evil omen. I was told that these wands were not in use among the easterners. The men in charge of the ceremony kept at hand a seal-hide thong like that pictured in fig. 76, but adorned with closely spaced red dots; it was used to tie up any candidate who became unruly.